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Fifty-first Session

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Wednesday, 25 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, His Excellency Mr. Kiro Gligorov, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gligorov (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) (*spoke in Macedonian; English text furnished by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, confident that it will make yet another positive contribution to the advancement of world peace and cooperation among nations and countries of the world.

The current international political and security situation is burdened with many crises, cases of blatant violation of international law, the uncontrolled hoarding of arms, upsets of the ecological balance, disrespect for human rights, widespread international terrorism, and tensions in economic and social development. Such developments have confronted the United Nations with the need to reform its system in order to preserve its ability to carry out its functions. This is especially so in the case of the plans that should determine global development in the twenty-first century, alleviate existing gaps in the economic and social development of countries and regions, and advance world peace.

The subject of the expansion of the Security Council is undoubtedly one that should receive priority treatment at this session. In view of the changed structure of the international community and the growing role of the Security Council in recent years, and of the need for further democratization of the decision-making process as regards global peace and security, the conditions for expansion seem ripe. The Republic of Macedonia is actively taking part in the activities of the Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. We believe that the proposal for including the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council, as well as the expansion of the number of rotating members is realistic and deserves special attention. At the same time, other constructive and complementary approaches in circulation should also be kept in mind. If necessary, the Republic of Macedonia is prepared to make an individual proposal in this respect with a view to overcoming any possible delay in the resolution of this issue.

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Wishing to make a constructive and active contribution to the work of the United Nations, the Republic of Macedonia has submitted its candidacy for rotating membership in the Security Council for the 1998-1999 term. We are convinced that our demeanour during and following the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the constructive and peaceful policy we have upheld, our acknowledged position as a factor of stability in the Balkans, our commitment to its Europeanization and our activities within the United Nations to date will be a sufficient basis and guarantee for securing the support of United Nations Members for our candidacy. I wish to assure them that we will fully justify the confidence they bestow.

From the very onset of our independence, the Republic of Macedonia, the only one of the former Yugoslav republics to achieve independence peacefully, has distinguished itself as an example of a country whose leverage in the international community and whose foreign policy are founded on consistent respect for the principles of the United Nations, a readiness to cooperate with neighbouring and other countries and to resolve all open issues in a peaceful manner on the basis of mutual respect, the inviolability of borders and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Led by these commitments, the Republic of Macedonia submitted two resolutions for good-neighbourly relations among the Balkan countries. They were sponsored by more than 30 countries and adopted unanimously, with the aim of undertaking measures and preventive action that will create a stable zone of peace and cooperation in the Balkans by the end of the year 2000. In accordance with the resolutions, the Republic of Macedonia will be the host of a high-level international meeting of the Balkan countries in January next year, dedicated to the advancement of stability in the region.

Led by the principles of the United Nations, last year the Republic of Macedonia signed the Interim Accord with the Republic of Greece within the framework of the negotiations held under United Nations auspices. The positive results of this Accord are already evident. We are confident of the prospects for good and friendly relations between our countries and that we will reconcile the remaining differences.

The level of democratization we have achieved, our reforms aimed at adapting the economy to market mechanisms, and our high human-rights standards confirm our intentions of becoming fully integrated into international and regional economic and security structures. Today, the Republic of Macedonia is a full-fledged member of the Council of Europe, the oldest European political organization, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is a partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's "Partnership for Peace". It has also concluded a cooperation agreement with the European Union, with prospects for closer association and membership in the Union.

The peace-keeping forces of the United Nations that comprise the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia have set the precedent for the United Nations successful involvement in the concept of preventive diplomacy. They have clearly demonstrated the justification and merit of this concept. We have a very high regard for the role that UNPREDEP plays in the preservation of peace and security in the Republic of Macedonia and the region. Consequently, and in view of the existing and potential threats to peace in the region, we have already requested an extension of the UNPREDEP mandate for an additional six months.

The region in which my country is situated, the Balkans, is one of the most sensitive in Europe. It is presently in the midst of the so-called "post-Dayton" era encompassing the process of bringing to life the fragile peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the normalization of relationships among countries and the opening of prospects for development and cooperation in the region. In this context, the Republic of Macedonia, as a peaceful country oriented towards Europe, remains steadfast in its policy, especially in terms of resolving the economic and social problems it is facing as a country in transition and particularly with regard to the rights of national minorities as a precondition not only for democratization and security in Macedonia, but also for wider security in the southern Balkans. The Republic of Macedonia has opted for the model of respect for human and minority rights and for the implementation of international standards pertaining to the rights of national minorities. This is guaranteed by the firm provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and through its legislative and political practice. We remain deeply convinced that, in the ethnically inter-mixed Balkans, the guaranteed rights of national minorities are the most important long-term factor for stable peace and cooperation. This is why we have proposed the idea of a comparative study regarding national- minority rights in the Balkans that will enable much more efficient action to

be taken by such international institutions as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and most certainly the United Nations.

Allow me to conclude my address by expressing my conviction that a vision of the world in the twenty-first century as one of peace, democracy and well-being will prompt all of us and the United Nations to act with persistence and determination. It is my hope that the decisions and the direction set out by this year's General Assembly will be a step towards that goal.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Arzú Irigoyen, President of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Arzú Irigoyen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Arzú Irigoyen (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-first regular session. I also wish to convey our appreciation to Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the skill and efficiency with which he conducted the work of the General Assembly in the course of its last regular session.

We are very close to the achievement of peace in my country. This can already be felt in the silence of the guns and the newly flourishing spirit of unity among brothers. Intolerance is giving way to awareness of the common challenges we face. We now realize that, for example, if we are to combat corruption and impunity, we need to share values and principles, though not necessarily ideologies.

United in diversity, we must discover our own means for building our future. Our country is healing its deep wounds and revealing its true face, as a generous land that is the home to age-old cultures. Guatemala is coming to terms with itself and, in so doing, is reconciling itself with the world.

We are once again speaking as a friendly nation among friendly nations. The peace process has enabled us to evolve our own agenda, which responds to the needs of our country without our having had to accept an agenda imposed by anyone else. To that end we have received the constant support of the international community, and in particular of the United Nations system.

Today, at a time when the reform of the system is the subject of such intense discussion, our national experience may perhaps be useful, as it is an example of cooperation that is at once respectful and dynamic, based fundamentally on internal efforts with appropriate external help. For us this approach is indispensable since, to a large extent, it has been possible to build peace, thanks to the valuable and diverse forms of support received from agencies of the United Nations system.

But this has not been effected through the mechanical application of preconceived formulas, or of automatic institutional moulds. On the contrary, what we have here is a challenging and complex empirical laboratory where all of us are learning step by step. It is, in fact, a constant exercise in discovery with living social tissues, an exercise in which we have all had to pool our best efforts. The creativity of individuals, Governments, and various organizations — private and public, local and national, regional and multilateral — has come together to produce a constant quest for the solutions we need. It has been an exercise in international solidarity that, complementing internal endeavours, has made it possible for us to forge ahead along the right path to recovery.

But the test tube is the life of our people, and for that reason there is little margin for error. Errors increase the suffering of my people. And Guatemala has suffered greatly from authoritarian intervention and the imposition of alien patterns that once impaired a political and social maturation process that sought to infuse its own life-giving fluids with contemporary ideas of equity and democracy. Domestic injustices and imbalances were aggravated by the tensions of the cold war that exploded within my country.

Now is the time for reconciliation. Now is the time once again to take development in hand. Now is the time to search for effective formulas to link our villages with the World Trade Organization; to link the poverty afflicting the families of our neighbourhoods with international financial institutions; and to link decisions independently taken at the level of our domestic communities with the large development agencies.

We are on the threshold of signing the peace. We look forward to this historic transition with hope and jubilation, and we foresee the complex stage of strengthening the fabric of society and production. From that stage we can look hopefully to the future. Peace will come to Guatemala because we Guatemalans have striven for it and because the international community has helped us along the way.

As is well known, last week in Mexico City the parties signed the agreement on the last substantive item of the agenda agreed upon in the peace talks, the one concerning the strengthening of civilian power and the role of the army in a democratic society. We now have to deal with the operational issues: demobilization, reinsertion into civil society, the cease-fire and the timetable for the implementation of the agreements. In the course of this year we shall initial, God willing, the final agreement for a firm and lasting peace, which will put an end to an armed conflict that has lasted 36 years.

It is worth emphasizing then, that for the last five months there has been no armed confrontation, which has allowed the peace talks to progress without subjecting our negotiators to the anguish and pressure of knowing that as they are working Guatemalan blood is being shed. That is over. Far from deadening or delaying the dialogue, this state of affairs has stimulated it, given the prospect of a definitive cessation of hostilities. This has also stimulated us to see clearly where we are going and to gain a more profound understanding of what has happened.

As many of the representatives in this Assembly know, the internal conflict caused great misfortune and suffering for our people. I am referring primarily to the irreparable loss of thousands of lives. I also have in mind the traumatic aftermath of the conflict, which is evident in the faces of every cripple, orphan and widow, and in every surviving family, a number of which were eye-witnesses to the tragedies. I am also referring to the economic losses, in the form of damage to infrastructure and lost opportunities for productive development.

I also wish to call to mind the set-backs caused by the conflict. Let us recall the words of the singer-songwriter who asked,

> "Who will return to us the fatherland that could have been?"

While more difficult to pinpoint, and perhaps impossible to measure, these too are irreparable losses: all that we could have done, but did not do; all the growth that could have occurred, but did not occur; all we could have built, but did not build.

While others were progressing, we were stagnating, locked in a cruel domestic struggle that included elements imported from the cold war, which arbitrarily kept in check for 40 years our political, social and economic evolution. While technological, commercial and political changes were taking place in the rest of the world, and nations were discovering new opportunities in their relations, we were plunged deeper into the violence of a domestic conflict that took the lives of thousands and thousands of young people, who were unable to provide their country with the fruits of their talents and endeavours. While new international options for well-being were blossoming elsewhere, we continued to be consumed internally by a dirty war that crushed entire villages and compelled many people to flee.

There is a part of our country that never came into being, because Guatemalans were bogged down in fratricidal domestic struggle that we were not able to stop in time — an internal conflict that — it is true — was fuelled by our own injustice, but — it must be acknowledged — was also fanned from abroad. But such is history: hope springs up amid tragedy, and lessons are drawn from mistakes. Our people has an extraordinary capacity for recovery and learning.

We are nearing the end of this stage, and another has already begun: one in which all of us — absolutely all — are responsible and committed. One of the consequences of this deeply traumatic and protracted conflict is that never before have we found ourselves in a situation so propitious for dialogue and reconciliation. Never before have we shared such a profound and keen awareness of our immense multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural wealth, or of our environment, which is extraordinarily varied. Never before have we been so keenly aware of our need for internal integration and for the development of our own potential.

We have within our grasp a unique opportunity, one that will never recur, to transform this moment into a moment for the future and for renovation. This is perhaps not the appropriate occasion for detailing all the progress made in recent months. Such details may be found in the various reports of United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and other agencies of the United Nations system. But it is worthwhile to stress the enormous effort that has gone into fulfilling the agreements already signed, even before most of them have come into force. In particular, we have had remarkable successes in the field of human rights, as has been recognized by various commissions and subcommissions dealing with the issue.

At this singular moment at the end of the century, when we are celebrating the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, it is fitting to point out that Guatemala has recently ratified and deposited International Labour Organization Convention 169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, which strengthens the rule of law in Guatemala by conferring benefits and guarantees on the Mayan population with regard to property, conditions of employment, training for professions, crafts and rural industries, health, social security, education, the administration of justice, the environment and the proper and rational use of natural resources.

We are very close to the signature of an Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. We now face the hardest part of our task, but also the most challenging part, replete with possibilities: that of creating peace, of building peace. We would do well, therefore, to recall two fundamental points: first, the peace that we are striving to build has a specific orientation; and, secondly, peace is not made only by those who sign the agreements.

We seek a peace that is well oriented. We should not be content with a precarious peace, or with political accommodations made for the occasion, with no sense of direction or permanence. The accords signed so far, and those that are to follow, express basic agreements that, taken as a whole, constitute a specific agenda aimed at deepening democracy and furthering development.

Furthermore, peace is not made only by those who sign the agreements. Peace is made on a day-to-day basis, by the entire population, which takes seriously the need for reconciliation and realizes optimistically that it is possible to have fair opportunities to work, educate oneself, be productive and improve one's situation.

Peace is built by men and women of flesh and blood, with their differences, passions, interests and enmities. Peace is built day by day, in villages, hamlets, neighbourhoods and communities. Peace is built through ordinary coexistence, with all Guatemalans, male or female, striving daily to make a living and to help their families get ahead, seeking out better opportunities while enduring hardships in a country with so many limitations and so much distrust. That is where reconciliation must take place and where we must identify the true enemies of peace: poverty, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance.

We live in a spirit of solidarity within a fragile shared space. Our mission is to care for it and improve it as a legacy for coming generations. That space, that possibility, does not belong to us; it is but a legacy of what former generations did or failed to do. Solidarity is not limited to those who stand before us; there is a kind of solidarity that embraces even those who have not yet been born. What can we do to ensure that this solidarity accepts life as a primary, elementary and basic value, when we have lived for so long immersed in violence?

We will attain development when we become capable of providing comprehensive security for all Guatemalans. The assurance that our children will not die because of negligence or lack of medical attention, the security of a stable job, plans and facilities for the acquisition of housing, security of access to a competitive educational system allowing us to learn and to teach our children, the security of ample nutrition, security for our possessions and for our lives, access to and equal treatment under impartial and timely systems of justice — these are the key aspects of comprehensive security.

In this regard, Central America has taken important decisions to renew its agendas under the Alliance for Sustainable Development, which it is taking decisive steps to implement, including through the Treaty on Democratic Security signed by the Presidents of the isthmus at San Pedro Sula in December 1995. That broad set of commitments prepares Central Americans to wage a comprehensive fight against trafficking in drugs and in human beings.

There can be no stable democracy over the long term if there are extreme inequalities in the distribution of wealth and of social opportunities. Democratic citizenship

poses the question of how we are to incorporate those who are unlikely to have access to public institutions; those who, because of poverty or discrimination, cannot invoke their rights or have them recognized. No democracy is possible when a significant percentage of the population is living in extreme poverty. Our democracy must generate economic conditions that permit the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population.

The greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity for Guatemala resides in organized, realistic and coherent implementation of the commitments derived from the agreements undertaken. That is why we must understand them as a starting point that opens up a new page of challenges and efforts for all the population.

For its part, the Government has taken on some very daring and far-reaching commitments that encompass almost all its institutions. They imply major legal reforms and major budgetary efforts. These commitments have made it possible to reach the agreements, and stability and the strengthening of peace and stability depend upon their fulfilment.

But to do all of this, we also need the understanding and firm support of the international community. We need a real opening of markets and fair prices for our products, as well as foreign investment to add to the internal savings achieved through the generation of jobs and the stable improvement of our productive capacity. We also need the complement of technical and financial cooperation, above all during the stage immediately following the signing of the peace.

For all of these reasons, Guatemala appreciates the support and recognition of the international community. For those same reasons, Guatemala also aspires to contribute, to the extent of its modest possibilities, to strengthening the multilateral system and respectful understanding among nations.

Guatemala attaches great importance to the principle of universality that must characterize the United Nations, and this leads us to express our conviction that the Republic of China on Taiwan must also be fully represented in our Organization and must actively participate in the search for solutions in this new global, interdependent world. In our opinion, and taking into account earlier positive experiences, this in no way contradicts any effort at reunification.

It is often said that we are living in a time of change. But it is much more than that: this is a change of times. We are living just on the bridge between two different eras of world history, where we cannot yet make out the difference between what is ending and what is beginning. There is an order that has gone into crisis, but there is a new order that cannot yet be clearly perceived. All institutions are being put to the test.

We view with appreciation and hope the fact that this interaction between Guatemala's experience and the respectful participation of Governments and multilateral institutions is yielding modest but valid solutions, enabling us to envisage a simple, competent and less bureaucratic form of institutional structures, and a kind of cooperation that does not undermine the precarious living conditions of the poor majorities in our countries and that contributes ideas and technical skills with due respect for our population. Guatemala is becoming a laboratory for cooperation with respect, of partnership rather than imposition.

It is also becoming a broad and open horizon for discovery, an opportunity to search for ways to encompass the aspirations, proposals and initiatives of so many people from inside and from abroad, and above all, to go on creating spaces for self-expression by the people and the communities of my country, which, with such courage, endurance, valour and desire, have not succumbed to adversity.

I wish to attest to the gratitude of my people and my Government to the Secretary-General and to all the officials who in various capacities have contributed to advancing the peace negotiations in my country, as well as to making a reality of the various complex efforts at development that we are undertaking. We wish especially to thank the Moderator appointed by the Secretary-General for the negotiations between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), the small but efficient Guatemala Unit of the Secretariat and all the members of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), as well as the other Secretariat officials who, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, have contributed to the success of the peace process.

Our deep gratitude goes also to the six countries that constitute the Group of Friends of the peace process,

which have worked so doggedly for that long-sought goal — Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States of America and Venezuela.

We wish also to express our appreciation to other Governments that, without being a formal part of this Group, have substantially contributed to the advancement of our reconciliation and development. Many thanks to all those persons of good will, committed to peace in my country.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Kinkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Last year we took stock of half a century of United Nations history. The rock we are pushing up the hill like Sisyphus always seems to roll back a little. We must not be discouraged by this. It remains our responsibility to do what we solemnly reaffirmed on the fiftieth anniversary of the world Organization: maintain peace and to help people who are suffering from want and poverty.

You, Mr. President, have issued a warning to us all for this fifty-first General Assembly. We must look beyond our national borders, and think and act accordingly. After making those anniversary promises, let us not fall back into the old routine and rituals. The vision of a more peaceful and more equitable world must not be lost.

The world Organization must continue to be the world's conscience. For who else other than this forum is to keep watch to prevent murder and torture, to ensure that refugees have the basic necessities of life and that our children are protected and cared for?

The world is grossly unjust. From the moment of birth millions of people have hardly any chance of living in conditions worthy of humankind. No one can turn away from this; it concerns us all. No country, no region and no group of States can bear all of the world's burdens and troubles alone. All, even the strongest among us, need solidarity, need the help of others. How can terrorism, for instance, a cancer of our time, be stopped without international cooperation?

Developments over the past 10 years have shown there is no cause for resignation. There can be progress — provided we pool our resources and act together. That is the lesson of Bosnia, of South Africa and of the Middle East, and of the historic achievements in the field of disarmament in recent years. Every child that is saved from death in Rwanda or Burundi, every refugee able to return to his native village in Bosnia, every rainforest area we can preserve, must strengthen our hope. The one world requires us to act as one.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a free election has been held for the first time after four terrible years of war. It has provided a crucial foundation for the country's recovery. Joint institutions must now be created without delay. The future members of the three-person presidency should meet in Sarajevo before the end of September.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had a very difficult task supervising the election in Bosnia. That organization's scope for action must be increased at the Lisbon Summit in December this year. The OSCE remains an indispensable pillar of the new peaceful order for Europe, which we believe to be necessary now that the iron curtain has come down.

The forces working for peace in the region are themselves not strong enough; there is still no self-sustaining stability. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there can be no permanent international police force — even the 60,000 troops of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), of the United Nations and of all the other countries cannot guarantee peace on the ground — but I think that for a limited time that country continues to require a "fire brigade". This presupposes a fresh mandate from the Security Council.

Germany is willing to provide a military contribution. By admitting more than 320,000 war refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany has practised human solidarity. We also have more than 130,000 Yugoslav nationals, most of them from Kosovo, who have to return to their native regions. This is a heavy burden for us, including in financial terms. But we gave

temporary protection and shelter to these people on humanitarian grounds, and we will not be found wanting in this respect now that their repatriation is becoming possible.

Europe has been torn by fratricidal wars for centuries. The current peaceful unification of that continent is a message of hope for the whole world. The first of our central and eastern European neighbours will soon belong to the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

My country Germany owes its unity to the confidence which the world placed in our policy of reconciliation and good neighbourliness. In our eyes that implies a duty: together with France, we will remain the motor of European Union.

Addressing the Assembly in 1989, my predecessor Hans-Dietrich Genscher extended a hand to Poland. Today I turn to our Czech neighbours in particular and say that the German-Czech declaration will be adopted shortly. Czechs and Germans can look confidently to a common European future.

The Russian people too must be winners in the process of European unification. The special partnership which NATO is seeking with Russia is of central importance for peace and security in Europe. And that is why we want as quickly as possible to draft the fundamentals of a charter between NATO and Russia, as I suggested in Carcassonne 18 months ago at a meeting of the European Union foreign ministers. Our offer stands. Russia should help shape Europe's future as an equal partner. That large and important country must be given a place in Europe commensurate with its size and importance.

Part of the European Union's peace message is that we Europeans stand for a policy of international cooperation among equals, and for a global partnership for development and the environment in the twenty-first century. New opportunities for such a partnership derive from the globalization of industry and technology. Never have so many people experienced so much progress as in the past 10 years. In the year 2020, if the present trend continues, the 15 countries with the largest gross national products will include nine of today's developing countries.

The recipe is free markets, democracy, reliability of the judicial system, and integration into the global economy. This kind of good governance was rewarded with $150 billion of private direct investment in 1995.

However, 90 per cent of that investment has gone to only 12 countries, and the gap between the poor and the rest of the world continues to widen. The World Summit for Social Development put the number of poor people at 1.3 billion, nearly a quarter of the entire human race. This calls for action from both sides, help from the community of nations and self-help on the part of the countries concerned. The one is the precondition for the other.

This evening I am having another meeting with my African colleagues. I take a very keen interest in the future of Europe's vast neighbouring continent. We should not see only Africa's negative side but the hopeful signs as well, and there are such signs. Democratization is progressing, as shown by the fact that elections have taken place or are scheduled in 17 countries this year. Average economic growth has outpaced population growth for the first time in many years. Life expectancy has increased by more than 25 per cent since 1960, and ever more children are going to school.

Germany supports Africa's integration into the world economy and the development of its own capabilities. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s is a sound foundation for these efforts. The Secretary-General's United Nations System-wide Initiative on Africa should likewise be used by all concerned as a basis for joint action.

However, much remains to be done. The ghastly events in Rwanda must not be repeated in Burundi. On the other hand, the United Nations should not be the organization of first resort in every conflict situation. It cannot solve every problem. Hence, the regional organizations must assume a larger measure of responsibility.

The Organization of African Unity, like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, has matured to a degree that commands respect. Germany, with one eye on Burundi, has to date provided one million deutsche mark in support of that organization's conflict prevention mechanism. High hopes have been placed in the efforts of Julius Nyerere. The proposed conference on the Great Lakes region has the support of Germany and the European Union.

Germany will remain a good partner and friend to the nations of Africa. That will also be my message at the forthcoming second European Union-Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministerial meeting in Windhoek. The regionalization process in Africa is an

element of hope. The outstanding example is southern Africa with the SADC. That region must become a locomotive for the whole continent.

One neighbouring region whose fate touches Europe is the Middle East. That is also the main reason for our strong commitment in the whole Middle East region. For historical reasons, Germany has a special relationship with Israel; that remains unshakable. Bilaterally and through the European Union we are the most important donor for the Palestinians. Germany will maintain that commitment. I confirmed this in my recent meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Levy and with President Yasser Arafat in Bonn.

Terrorists should not be given any chance to block the path to peace. The sealing off of Gaza and the West Bank must be eased and discontinued as soon as possible. That is our common endeavour. The struggle against terrorism must remain at the top of the international agenda. I urgently appeal to all concerned to resume the peace process without delay. There is no alternative.

It has been estimated that the world's population will number about 10 billion in 2030. For their sake, for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must take steps today to ensure that the Earth remains habitable. Peace and human dignity, economic progress and protection of the natural foundations of life are inseparable. Without social justice, without any vision for the world's economic progress, we shall not be able to break the vicious circle of poverty, environmental destruction and population explosion.

We have no time to lose. Every second three babies are born, and every year the world's population increases by nearly 100 million. All of them need food, clothing, schools and a home. Every minute about 12 acres of tropical rain forest are lost, an area the size of 40 football pitches.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry warned that the human race had not inherited the Earth from its fathers but had borrowed it from its children. We became acutely aware of this at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. North and South, East and West, are struggling to survive together in spaceship Earth, whose blue protective shield is becoming increasingly fragile.

Our task now is to convert that environmental awareness into environmental action. The year 1997 will be crucial for such action. The special session of the General Assembly devoted to environment and development must chart the course for the next millennium in order to restore the balance between man, nature and the economy.

Germany's industrial community has voluntarily undertaken to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by the year 2005. Since 1990, Germany has reduced those emissions by nearly 13 per cent and thereby has led the way for the rest of the world.

We are contributing 312 million deutsche mark to the pilot programme to protect Brazil's tropical forests. That represents 60 per cent of the total contributions made so far. We appeal to the community of nations to become more heavily involved in this programme. We can only succeed together or fail together.

At the 1997 climate conference in Japan we must achieve the objective agreed upon in Berlin 12 months ago: the adoption of a substantive and binding protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At the recent Geneva conference, the great majority of nations came out in favour of specific targets and time limits. This is encouraging.

I wish to thank all members once again for supporting our efforts to have the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change established in Bonn. May I also ask members to support our proposal that the secretariat of the Framework Convention to Combat Desertification likewise be located in Bonn, as it has to cooperate closely with the climate secretariat. The United Nations will find that living and working conditions in our country are good.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development rightly makes people the focal point of all efforts. We must continue to concentrate on combating poverty and providing basic and vocational education. Even if that is not the kind of subject that makes headlines, it is and will remain, together with peacekeeping, one of our principal tasks.

Equal opportunities for women must not remain mere theory.

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come, is a saying that applies to human dignity and human rights. The fall of the Berlin Wall showed that the people's pursuit of freedom and personal happiness is, in the long run, stronger than any dictatorship. That is why the worldwide defence of human rights will likewise not be in vain.

Mr. Minoues-Triquell (Andorra), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It all boils down to something quite natural: that we treat one another as humans and that we do not inflict upon others what we would not like to have inflicted upon ourselves. Murderers and torturers must not be allowed to sleep peacefully. Mladić and Karadzić, and all for whom arrest warrants have been issued, deserve to be brought before the International Tribunal in The Hague. Germany calls for the early convening of a conference to establish an international criminal court.

There is a core of human rights that are common to us all and that are universally valid. This fact received international confirmation at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights. There can and should be no withdrawal from that position.

With the East-West confrontation now consigned to the past, intercultural dialogue assumes ever-greater significance. Close to 2.5 million Muslims are living in Germany. If only for this reason, it is of special importance to develop greater mutual understanding between Christianity and Islam.

A subject very close to my heart, as former Minister of Justice, is the protection of our children, the weakest members of society. Universal Children's Day was observed on 20 September. Its motto: "Children have rights". What do those rights look like in reality? Every day 35,000 children die of hunger. Twelve million children do not live beyond the age of 5. Two million are forced into prostitution. Two hundred thousand children around the world are used as soldiers in war. Millions of them are used as cheap labour.

The Stockholm conference on sexual abuse of children has awakened world opinion, and I should like to thank the Swedish Government for having hosted and organized this conference, which shocked us all into action. The atrocious way many of our children are being treated is a disgrace — a disgrace — to our civilization. The Stockholm Plan of Action must be followed by global action. This we owe to our children. And I should like to make it very clear that anyone who violates the weakest members of society — children, that is — deserves to be outlawed by society.

Peace is not everything, but without peace everything is nothing. These words originate from the time when East and West faced each other armed to the teeth. In the meantime the nightmare of a nuclear inferno has been dispelled. Yesterday's signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was another momentous step in this process, I believe, after half a century of international debate and protest against nuclear testing.

In expressing my thanks to Australia I appeal to all nations to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. Since the end of the Second World War upwards of 2,000 nuclear tests have been carried out. We now have the chance to put a stop to them once and for all. Anyone who rejects something good because they will only accept something perfect should be mindful of their responsibility to future generations. We cannot force the atomic genie back into the bottle, but we owe it to our children and grandchildren to tame it — at least to tame it.

The total abolition of all chemical weapons is of similar consequence. The Chemical Weapons Convention must enter into force next spring. All nations, and especially those with the largest stockpiles of such weapons, must meet their tremendous responsibility and ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

I should also like to touch upon an issue that I take a very personal, keen interest in, and that is a totally different kind of mass-destruction weapon: anti-personnel mines. I travelled to Mozambique and Cambodia and took a look at the situation there. Hundreds of millions of such anti-personnel mines are still in the ground. Year in, year out they kill and maim 20,000 people and make entire regions permanently uninhabitable. These treacherous tools of murder must be banned.

Germany has completely renounced anti-personnel mines and imposed a unilateral, open-ended ban on exports. Residual stocks are to be destroyed by the end of 1997. In my Seven-Point Programme of Action I have proposed a number of measures to maintain the momentum generated in Geneva. My main objective — because I think the motto should be "first things first" — is to improve the efficiency of mine clearance. We will attend a conference in Canada very soon which deals with the political aspects of this issue, trying to ban land-mines. But we should also at the same time try to concentrate on improving the efficiency of mine clearance, that is, testing and using mechanical clearance equipment. We quickly need machinery that can be mass-produced in order to remove this plague without harming people. I do not know whether anyone here has watched a mine-clearance operation. It is done by people and can be compared to trying to remove a sand-dune with a spoon. I think it is incredible that highly developed

nations such as ours and many others are not able to produce a piece of machinery for a large-scale de-mining operation. I want to focus the technical knowledge that we have to make this matter progress as quickly as possible.

If we want to win peace, we must not only consider conflict prevention; we must also pay greater attention to the situation after the termination of military hostilities. Peace-building was the subject of the international conference that we sponsored in Berlin in July. That conference produced a number of interesting and tangible results, which we are making available to all Member States in the form of a report. Together with other countries we intend to submit to members during this session of the General Assembly a draft resolution on peace consolidation through practical steps towards disarmament. Whether in Bosnia, Rwanda or Angola, all previous efforts will prove in vain unless we can prevent a resurgence of violence.

Most of the burden is borne by the 26,000 or so Blue Helmets and civilian personnel making up the peacekeeping missions, as well as by the countless courageous staff of non-governmental organizations who are doing their job all over the world under difficult conditions. Speaking here in the United Nations, I should like to express my sincere thanks to the non-governmental organizations. We are proud of them.

In our resolution marking the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we solemnly undertook to pass on to the next millennium a United Nations organization equipped and financed to perform its tasks. The greatest political significance attaches to reform of the Security Council, in whose work we have been closely involved over the last two years. This, the principal guardian of world peace, still bears the countenance of the year 1945, but it now needs a new one for the year 2000. It is a question of enhancing that body's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness. After a three-year debate the time has come to put the various elements together and start the restructuring process, to now get things done after having analysed what can be done. We are pleased that a large number of Member States are in favour of a permanent seat for Germany on the Security Council. I really believe that the time is approaching when the General Assembly will have to decide.

What continues to require our immediate attention is the financial crisis. The Organization's rationalization and reform are indispensable and urgent. A glance at the books is enough to tell us that. The regular United Nations budget shows zero growth. The Secretariat has lost more than 1,000 posts, and further reductions will follow next year. So much has already been achieved.

I therefore take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his staff, who, both at headquarters and in the field, continue to achieve outstanding results despite the reductions in their numbers and the constant lack of funds. I should like to thank them very warmly.

I wish to add another word if I may. The United Nations, in its actions and decisions, can be only as strong as its Members allow it to be. People tend to overlook that fact so readily when they criticize this Organization. I stress this point because I think that the outside world has a distorted image of the United Nations. The United Nations is us, the Member States. We can only achieve what we want to achieve together.

I am afraid that I must repeat that we will have to save and rationalize further still. The need for reform is no justification for refusing to pay contributions, however. Moreover, special rights also imply special duties. The German-American philosopher Hans Jonas said that responsibility is the most important principle of the new age. Let us act in accordance with that principle.

Address by Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden

The Acting President *(interpretation from French):* The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French):* I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, Mr. Göran Persson, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Persson (Sweden): The world of today is faced with a paradox. While our global interdependence is growing and threats to our societies require globally coordinated efforts, countries look inwards to their own regions. But regional cooperation should never be made a pretext for ignoring the outside world. It should open itself to the world. It should be a building block for truly global solidarity.

We need a vision of a global neighbourhood, a global ethic and a global citizenship based on equality,

tolerance and solidarity. The globalization of our societies is irreversible. We need to cooperate to deal with its consequences.

We have the instrument: the United Nations. At 50, the United Nations is the subject of criticism and lack of confidence. The experience of political setbacks in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is not quickly forgotten. As in Bosnia, alternatives to the United Nations are sought to deal with pressing international issues.

But the tasks of the United Nations have not been made easier by Member States' refusing to give it adequate resources. Many Members, including some major Powers, still do not pay their contributions to the United Nations fully or on time. It is a shame that the Secretary-General has to devote much of his time to pleading with Member States to fulfil their financial obligations.

Of course, the United Nations has its shortcomings. It suffers from bureaucracy and resistance to change. There are inefficiencies, but there are also success stories. We must not forget how United Nations operations helped build peaceful societies in Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique, nor how United Nations humanitarian actions have saved lives and alleviated suffering in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, the former Yugoslavia and other crisis areas.

For security in a broad sense, we need a global Organization. We need the United Nations as a meeting place. We need the United Nations as a guardian of international norms and principles. We need the United Nations to prevent conflicts and to find peaceful solutions when violence erupts. We need the United Nations to cope with global threats to human security. We need the United Nations as a safeguard against environmental threats and in favour of sustainable development. We need the United Nations to promote democracy and human rights. We need the United Nations as a focal point for global solidarity.

To realize this vision, we need a strong United Nations. Present inefficiencies have to be dealt with vigorously. Reform does not automatically equal down-sizing. In some fields, we may even have to expand the Organization. But resources should not be wasted. Confidence in the Organization demands financial discipline. A revitalized United Nations means a more focused and more determined United Nations.

We need a United Nations that does not abandon its position as the principal instrument for maintaining international peace and security, a United Nations which is capable of acting rapidly with adequate means and resources. Today, I join with 15 other Heads of State and Government in a statement in support of renewing multilateralism. Without political leadership, the necessary changes cannot be made.

My Government, the Swedish Government, sees the following steps as immediately required. First, United Nations Members must make a commitment to global multilateral cooperation. Secondly, payment must be made of assessed contributions to the United Nations in full, unconditionally and on time. Thirdly, there must be a commitment to strengthen and renew the United Nations, including a time-frame for comprehensive reform. Fourthly, a commitment to the United Nations as an instrument for sustainable economic and social development is necessary. Fifthly, we must adopt an integrated approach to security in view of long-term threats to our societies. Sixthly, there must be a commitment to early action to prevent conflict and man-made disasters. Finally, there is need for an agreement to develop the capacity of regional organizations to act in cooperation with the United Nations.

The Swedish Government is committed to a strong and effective United Nations and we are ready to contribute to this objective. Therefore, Sweden seeks a seat on the Security Council for the 1997-1998 period. Our candidature has been launched with the full support of the other Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway.

Members of the Security Council have a particular responsibility for international peace and security. It is essential that small and medium-size countries serve on the Council as well. The principle of rotation of non-permanent seats is important to us, for we have not served on the Council for the past 20 years.

If elected to the Council, Sweden would continue to pursue openness and transparency. The links between the Council and the United Nations membership at large must be strengthened.

Sweden would take independent positions, upholding the principles of international law. The primacy of international and humanitarian law is a pillar of our foreign policy. Sweden would contribute to a more efficient United Nations role in the new generation of peace-keeping, including better coordination between the civilian and military aspects of such operations. We

would also work for clearer mandates for United Nations operations.

The capacity of the United Nations to command and control large-scale peace-keeping and humanitarian operations should be secured. We need an Organization capable of coordinating the various aspects of peace operations, including political peacemaking, military peace-keeping, long-term peace-building and humanitarian efforts.

In our national planning for participation in future peace operations, my Government is taking steps to integrate the training of military and civilian personnel in order to facilitate coordination in the field. We invite other countries to such training in Sweden.

Sweden believes that the sanctions instrument has to be refined. It is an important instrument for helping to preclude the use of armed force. But ways must be found to avoid the suffering of innocent civilians and to alleviate the consequences of sanctions for third parties. This is essential for the credibility and efficiency of the sanctions instrument.

The United Nations represents the moral authority of the world community. It has a vital role in seeing to it that war crimes do not go unpunished. The Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda should be given the necessary support. The message must be clear. Civilians must be protected in all armed conflicts, whether internal or international. It should never be possible to live out criminal perversions, to murder, torture or rape with impunity. A permanent international criminal court should be established in the year to come.

The financial crisis and the non-payment of assessed contributions to the United Nations must not be used as an instrument to precipitate reforms, nor should they be an excuse not to start urgent reforms. The possibility of using alternative sources of financing needs to be explored further. They could be used on a voluntary basis and serve to finance special needs outside the regular United Nations budget.

The financing of global development cooperation is a critical issue that goes beyond the present financial crisis of the United Nations. The willingness to pay is decreasing. Development assistance is at its lowest level in decades. Only four countries — Sweden among them — fulfil the United Nations 0.7 per cent aid target. In our own case, we maintain this commitment despite a very difficult financial situation.

Negotiated replenishment of multilateral development funds is not being honoured. The financing of global cooperation is a long-term issue that requires a long-term solution.

The globalization of our economies, our politics and our daily lives calls for cooperation. This has been clearly illustrated in the report of the Commission on Global Governance. Industrialized and developing countries will realize that we have common interests, not least in meeting the threats to our common future, the environment. Further efforts must also be made to resolve the debt crisis for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries.

We have a joint interest in open borders and free trade, which create growth and wealth. A difficult obstacle to such a development is the worldwide increase in organized crime. In my own region around the Baltic Sea, the Heads of Government have decided to elaborate a common plan of action to combat cross-border crime.

I believe that this session of the General Assembly should send a strong political signal that intensified global efforts are also needed in this area. What is needed is increased exchange of information, judicial cooperation and closer cooperation in training, *inter alia*, through Interpol.

Another global threat is the proliferation of arms, both conventional arms and those designed for mass destruction. For decades, Sweden has been in the forefront in the struggle against nuclear arms. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is essential. It would be a historic step towards the elimination of nuclear arms. I welcome the report of the Canberra Commission. It is a timely and valuable contribution to this endeavour.

Anti-personnel landmines are a threat to development, to reconstruction and to human dignity in many parts of the world. Mines do not discriminate between an invading soldier and a child at play. They totally ignore cease-fires and political settlements.

It is imperative that we move towards a global ban on these killers. Stockpiles should be destroyed. Sweden, for its part, will take such a unilateral step. All countries must adhere to the stricter legal regime that has been agreed for landmines, and much larger resources should be directed to humanitarian mine clearance. My

Government is prepared to make its substantial contribution to this end.

Multilateral cooperation is indispensable for dealing with the crucial issues of survival facing us on the threshold of the next millennium. We have a common responsibility to give to the next generation the tools for such cooperation. True security is global.

Sweden contributes actively to cooperation and security in our Baltic neighbourhood and in Europe. Our firm support for peace and development in the Middle East, in southern Africa, in Asia and in Central America is well known. True to our traditions and our vision, we continue to stand up for cooperation and security in our global neighbourhood.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Vice Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen.

Mr. Qian Qichen (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Please allow me first of all to offer my sincere congratulations to Ambassador Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I am convinced that with his outstanding ability and rich experience he will fulfil this lofty mission with distinction. I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the important contribution he made during his presidency of the last session.

The 1990s are a period of momentous transition, during which international relations are undergoing the most far-reaching changes since the Second World War. The collapse and disappearance of the bipolar structure has rekindled hope that the world will become a community of countries with equal rights for all, rather than one dominated by a single big Power. Multipolarity is gaining momentum in a global as well as a regional context. Major Powers are readjusting their relationships. On the other hand, the multitude of developing countries have become increasingly aware of the need to bolster their strength through concerted efforts. The Non-Aligned Movement continues to uphold the ideals and principles of independence, independent decision-making and non-affiliation with blocs, and is vigorously pushing for a new just and democratic international order of peace and equality. Regional economic organizations, which are displaying great vitality, are expanding their role in promoting regional cooperation and development in their respective areas.

Asia's upsurge is having a significant impact on the world's political and economic configurations. The world is deeply impressed with the vigorous economic development of Asia, East Asia in particular. The convening of the first Asia-Europe meeting highlighted the changes now being seen and marked an important new beginning for an equal, cooperative relationship between Asia and Europe. As the world moves towards multipolarity, the forces for peace are bolstered. The call for dialogue and cooperation, as against confrontation and conflict, has become louder.

In the Asia-Pacific region, efforts to maintain peace and stability and promote common development through dialogue, consultation and cooperation have yielded positive results. An agreement on confidence-building in the military field along border areas has been concluded between China on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the other; this agreement governs a boundary over 3,000 kilometres in length. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum has succeeded in bringing Asia-Pacific countries together to consider security issues facing the region. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) has become a useful mechanism for promoting trade and investment liberalization as well as economic and technological cooperation in the region.

The past year has seen peace returning to a number of war-torn countries and regions. We are pleased to note that the peace accord reached between the belligerents in Bosnia and Herzegovina is being implemented, and that Yugoslavia and Croatia have normalized their relations. It is hoped that peace will soon be fully restored to the region of the former Yugoslavia in order to put an end to the prolonged conflict in that part of Europe.

The impact on Africa of the drastic changes in the post-cold war international situation is waning. Africa is entering a new historical era in which it is striving for peace, stability and development. Many burning issues in Africa have already been or are in the process of being settled gradually. At the same time, however, some

countries and regions are still plagued by the scourge of war. We hope that the international community will continue to give attention and attach importance to African issues so as to help bring lasting peace and development to the whole African continent at an early date.

But the path towards peace is tortuous. After some major gains in preceding years, the Middle East peace process has hit snags again. China is concerned at this development. We hope that all the parties concerned will strive for an early comprehensive and just settlement of this issue by strictly observing the agreements already reached and resuming negotiations and dialogue on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Peace should have prevailed in the post-cold-war world, in which equal members of the international community should respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, refrain from invading each other or interfering in each other's internal affairs, and live in harmony with each other, in a spirit of seeking common ground and putting aside differences. However, the reality is that the world today is far from tranquil because the cold-war mentality dies hard and hegemonism has repeatedly raised its ugly head. Interference in other countries' internal affairs under various pretexts, and indulgence in sanctions-wielding or even the use of force are trampling on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and all accepted norms of international relations, thereby threatening and undermining world peace and stability. Recent controversies in international forums, generated by the issue of sanctions, signify that in the context of a growing trend towards multipolarity, hegemonism and power politics will become increasingly untenable.

The vigorous expansion of international trade and investment and the rapid advance of science and technology have led to closer economic ties between countries and regions, thus accelerating the process of economic globalization. This presents a rare opportunity to both developed and developing countries. By riding the tide of globalization and relying on their own unremitting efforts, some developing countries have achieved sustained and rapid economic growth, thereby giving a great impetus to world economic growth. These and other changes on the world scene have widened the prospects of international cooperation.

Regrettably, however, a counter-current of trade protectionism has recently arisen in the ranks of developed countries, designed to curtail the development of developing countries and exclude them from the decision-making process on major world economic issues. Any act prejudicial to developing countries will in the final analysis undermine the interests of developed countries. International economic exchanges and cooperation should be built on the basis of mutual complementarity. Facing the tide of economic globalization, neither developed nor developing countries should resort to trade protectionism. Rather, both should make the necessary readjustments and reforms in the light of their own national conditions in order to promote their welfare and keep out of harm's way. Only by enhancing international exchanges and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit can we jointly cope with new problems arising in the course of world economic advances and achieve sustained common development and prosperity.

No one should overlook the unevenness of world development and the ever widening gap between developed and developing countries. Caught in the web of relentless international competition, the least-developed countries are in distress, and the risk of marginalization is looming large. To make matters worse, the amount of official development assistance from richer countries is shrinking every year, with more stringent conditions attached. The coffers of the United Nations Capital Development Fund are drying up, and future prospects are grim indeed. The international community, and especially the developed countries, are duty-bound to take effective measures to reverse this dire situation. The promotion of economic development and the prosperity of all countries, and the elimination of poverty should always be at the top of the United Nations agenda.

Strengthening international cooperation in the field of the environment and development is a vital link in global efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Four years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the public has become increasingly aware of the importance of environmental protection. Sustainable development has become a major objective in the socio-economic development strategies of all countries. However, international cooperation in this domain is disappointingly lagging. Developed countries have failed to live up to their pledges under Agenda 21 in terms of funding and technology transfer, yet they demand that developing countries accept obligations exceeding their capability at their present level of development. It is hoped that next year's special session on environment and development will be able to resolve these issues.

Poverty, unemployment, the problem of refugees, crime, over-population, environmental deterioration, drug abuse and terrorism — these scourges remain formidable and impede global stability and development. In the face of these challenges, all countries should not only carry out social development policies commensurate with their own national conditions, but should also actively cooperate with one another in line with the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. The United Nations needs to enhance its social programmes focusing on developing countries.

The international community at large should press for the implementation of the follow-up actions of the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in favour of universal social development.

Our Organization has gone through vicissitudes in the course of half a century. Enormous changes have taken place on the world scene. It is imperative for the United Nations to carry out appropriate rational reforms so that it can better perform the noble mission of the times and usher a better world into the twenty-first century.

All reforms must be conducive to realizing the purposes and principles of the Charter and to improving the efficiency of the United Nations. They must also contribute to a more positive and effective United Nations role in promoting world peace and common development. They must conform to the principle of the sovereign equality of all States, and reflect the aspirations of the developing countries, which comprise more than two-thirds of the membership. Democratic consultations should be practiced throughout this process. We are confident that we will be able to achieve a broad consensus as long as all of us engage in patient deliberations in the spirit of openness and fair play, and with a readiness to consider all legitimate concerns.

The United Nations continues to be plagued by a serious financial crisis. The Organization cannot function normally without firm and reliable fiscal resources. We call on the major countries whose financial contributions to the Organization are in arrears to fulfil the financial obligations set forth in the Charter by unconditionally paying up in full without further delay.

Major progress has been made in the field of arms control and disarmament since the last session of the General Assembly. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty resulting from two and a half years of negotiations has finally been adopted by the General Assembly.China actively participated in the Treaty negotiations and displayed maximum flexibility, thereby contributing significantly to the final conclusion of the Treaty. We have always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. In our view, the comprehensive test-ban Treaty is only a first step in the entire process of comprehensive nuclear disarmament. There are still large stockpiles of nuclear arms in the world. Some nuclear Powers still refuse to undertake not to be the first to use such weapons. We still have a long way to go, and must continue to work strenuously in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In order to expedite nuclear disarmament and free ourselves from the danger of nuclear war forever, I wish to reiterate the following calls on behalf of the Chinese Government: first, the major nuclear Powers should renounce their policy of nuclear deterrence; those possessing huge nuclear arsenals should continue to cut back their stockpiles drastically.

Secondly, all nuclear States should assume the obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances; they should unconditionally renounce the use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear States or nuclear-free zones; and they should conclude international instruments to that effect without delay.

Thirdly, those States which have deployed nuclear weapons overseas should withdraw them completely; all nuclear States should pledge support for moves to set up nuclear-free zones; they should respect the status of such zones and assume corresponding obligations.

Fourthly, all States should refrain from developing or deploying weapons systems in outer space and missile defence systems that undermine strategic security and stability.

Fifthly, all States should negotiate with a view to concluding an international convention on the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons.

Since mankind was able to produce nuclear weapons in the twentieth century, it is fully capable of abolishing them in the twenty-first century. The Chinese Government and people are ready to join hands with all Governments

and peoples of the world to strive for the realization of this lofty goal.

My country continues to press forward along the road of reform, opening up and modernization. Our economy maintains a healthy momentum. The macroeconomic environment continues to improve. We anticipate a growth rate of around 10 per cent this year. Inflation will be kept below 10 per cent. Despite severe natural disasters in some parts of the country, we have still managed to gather a bumper harvest of summer crops this year. Grain output for the entire year is expected to top the previous year's figures. The Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Outline of the Long-Range Objectives to the Year 2010 were inaugurated this year. They depict a promising future for China's modernization drive at the turn of the century. By the year 2000, when our population will have had a net increase of 300 million, we expect to quadruple our 1980 per capita gross national product. And by the year 2010 our gross national product is anticipated to be twice that of the year 2000. Then we will have put in place a viable socialist market economy.

Seventeen years of reform and opening up have brought about a fourfold increase in our gross national product. Our overall national strength will grow further in another 15 years. Yet China will still be a developing country with relatively low ranking in terms of indicators such as per capita gross national product. China's development will only help to bolster the elements making for peace. We pose no threat to anyone anywhere, but will only help to strengthen the cause of world peace, stability and development. On the other hand, if China fails to achieve economic development and its population of 1.2 billion is mired in poverty, that would indeed be ominous for world peace and stability.

China will resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong as from 1 July 1997. This will be a milestone in the great cause of our national reunification. It is also a good example of how countries can peacefully resolve issues left over by history. Preparations are under way to put into effect our resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. We are fully capable of ensuring a smooth transfer of government and transition in Hong Kong. After Hong Kong's return to the embrace of the motherland, we will put into effect the policy of "one country, two systems". As a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, and in conformity with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong will be administered by the Hong Kong people. It will enjoy a high degree of autonomy. The existing social and economic system and way of life will remain unchanged, and the laws currently in force in Hong Kong will be basically maintained. Hong Kong will retain its status as an international trade, financial and shipping centre, free port and separate customs territory. Its long-term stability and prosperity will be guaranteed. Foreign economic interests in Hong Kong will be accommodated.

Twenty-five years ago, at its twenty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted the historic resolution 2758 (XXVI), solemnly declaring the restoration to the People's Republic of China all its lawful rights in the United Nations. That resolution thoroughly settled the question of China's representation in the United Nation in all aspects — political, legal and procedural.

There is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of its sacred territory. "Peaceful reunification and one country with two systems" — this is our unswerving guideline for the settlement of the Taiwan question. This question involves a cardinal principle of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the great task of reunification. It is a purely internal affair of China which will brook no outside interference. The Chinese Government and people are determined to carry through the struggle against all attempts to split their territory or create an independent Taiwan. No force on Earth can hold back China's great cause of reunification.

The world is on the march at top speed. New contradictions and problems are constantly arising. The profound changes in the international scene have brought forth rare opportunities as well as serious challenges. Let us seize the opportunities, meet the challenges and push forward the cause of peace and development. Such is the glorious mission which our times have bestowed on us. The Chinese Government and people are ready to join with all other Governments and peoples in this endeavour.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French):* I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Hervé de Charette.

Mr. De Charette (France)*(interpretation from French)*: My country is especially pleased at the President's election to lead the General Assembly. He represents a great country that plays an important role in the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and I am glad that he is to preside over our work during this crucial period for our Organization.

I should also like to endorse the remarks made by Ireland's Foreign Minister in the name of the European Union.

Last year, we celebrated the first half century of the United Nations existence, during which its energies were devoted, with a success universally acknowledged, to the organization of international society. A mammoth collective undertaking has been accomplished and the United Nations has become the keystone of an international system founded on law and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. This collective undertaking owes much to the determined action of successive Secretaries-General, and I should like to pay a special and warm tribute here to Mr. Boutros-Ghali, whose determination, vision of the future and firmness have given our Organization a presence and vitality rarely achieved. He deserves our confidence.

Today, as the century reaches its turning point, the Organization is confronted with another major challenge: globalization. In every sphere, the ideas and realities to which we were accustomed are changing at a pace unequalled in human history. The movement of people, of ideas and images, and of goods is accelerating as distances shrink. At the same time, the standardization of cultural practices — and the legitimate reactions this provokes — the general spread of low-cost high technologies and intensified competition bring into question the positions that have been achieved and the functioning, if not the very foundation, of international society. At the same time, the production of wealth is increasing tenfold and scientific progress is growing rapidly, while unexpected opportunities for development are being given to new nations.

But these benefits have adverse effects. The control fragile States have over their development is being eroded, national legislation is becoming inapplicable and the notion of territorial integrity is changing in meaning. In short, national authorities are too often reduced to powerlessness by transnational phenomena over which they have only scant control. If we are not careful, we are going to be living in a world without criteria, without values, without references, in which some — the strongest and the richest — will be in a position to decide alone on the future of the planet. It should come as no surprise that, in these circumstances, the United Nations has many detractors.

Our Organization is in effect a privileged forum in which the framework of a genuine international society can be built, a framework that frees the forces of creativity and development and represses the forces of violence and oppression. It is up to all of us present here to enable the United Nations to play that role and to ensure peace, security and progress in these new circumstances and in keeping with its mandate. Rest assured that France, a founding Member of the Organization and permanent member of the Security Council, will devote all its energies to this task and will be in the front ranks of this new fight.

Our world is confronted today with terrible problems that know no borders and, sadly, spare no population: terrorism, crime and drugs. The fight against these scourges is foremost in our concerns and high on the international agenda. Accordingly, an uncompromising fight against terrorism, whatever its forms, perpetrators and motives, constitutes our priority. This is why I convened a conference on terrorism in Paris last July that brought together the G-7 countries and Russia. We adopted 25 practical, specific recommendations. They will be implemented by each State and will strengthen international cooperation against terrorism. Therefore, today I make a solemn call on the entire international community to join wholeheartedly in this fight.

We must also react without weakness to the challenge of organized crime, in the knowledge that it knows how to make the fullest use of the possibilities that have been opened up by the liberalization of trade. For it is the very foundation of our societies and institutions that it endangers today.

International cooperation is indispensable to stem this phenomenon. France, pursuing the path mapped out by the Canadian presidency, has drafted a corpus of legal and operational recommendations with its G-7 partners and Russia to improve the effectiveness of the fight against this scourge. These should guide in particular the action of the States most affected by transnational organized crime. France recently strengthened its financial legislation against money-laundering. All States should pay particular attention to this phenomenon, which is one of the hardest forms of organized crime to counter.

One of the most loathsome aspects of organized crime is that which targets our children. A world summit on combating the sexual exploitation of children was recently held in Stockholm. That is good, but it is still not enough. Everyone must now make a commitment to implementing effective measures for immediate application. I urge all States represented here to act quickly and with determination in this area which, more than any other, affects our future. The Assembly may rest assured of France's political resolve.

Drugs are a formidable threat today because of the ravages they inflict on young people. International cooperation must be solid. The producer and consumer countries must recognize their shared responsibility. The international community must therefore continue to pursue convergent policies to reduce the supply of illegal substances and the demand for them. The European Union has chosen such a global policy and has launched large-scale actions in close coordination with international institutions, in particular the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. France strongly supports the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly devoted to drugs in 1998.

These new perils do not supplant the traditional challenges, which our Organization must address with sustained vigilance and unwavering firmness. Peace-keeping remains the central function of our Organization under the terms of the founding Charter. The mission of the United Nations to soothe tensions, separate combatants and resolve conflicts remains fundamental.

The panoply of available instruments is becoming more diversified. Recent additions to conventional peace-keeping missions include activities to consolidate peace, preventive diplomacy measures and even regional conferences — such as I hope will soon take place with regard to the situation in the Great Lakes region.

Sanctions constitute one of these instruments. They are a useful weapon, but they penalize populations and must therefore be used with prudence and moderation, follow strict criteria and — I stress this — always be limited in time. Only under those conditions can sanctions, which are sometimes necessary to prevent something worse, continue to be used by our Organization with the required legitimacy.

Of course, we cannot refer to the traditional challenges to peace without speaking about current regional conflicts. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where my country has paid a heavy tribute, France is pleased that elections could be held, imperfect though they were. That represents an essential stage in the return to peace provided for by the agreements signed in Paris in 1995.

But peace still has to be consolidated, devastated territories be reconstructed, refugees encouraged to return and a civilian society rebuilt. To that end, France has proposed a plan of consolidated action by the international community with a time-frame of two years. With this goal in mind, we will very shortly be hosting an international conference in Paris to examine, and I hope adopt, this proposal.

Similarly, the peace process in the Middle East seems to be at a crucial stage. I wish here to express my anxiety about it. I certainly believe the process to be irreversible, but I am also aware of the precariousness of the gains and the urgency of the need for long-term solutions. We are half-way there. I say "we", because this process concerns not just Arabs and Israelis but all of us here.

For France, peace in the Middle East is built upon dialogue between equal partners, respect for the identity of each and the right of peoples to the free determination of their destiny, the affirmation of their independence, and security. That is why — and I wish to emphasize this point — France believes that there will be no lasting peace in the region, based on an exchange of land for peace, unless the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is respected, together with their legitimate aspirations for a State.

We believe that a just and balanced agreement between Israelis and Palestinians cannot avoid the issues of Jerusalem, refugees and the settlements in the Palestinian territories. Finally, a lasting peace presupposes that Israel is assured of its existence within secure and recognized borders.

France believes that complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for total peace constitutes the basis of an agreement between Syria and Israel, and that Lebanon must regain full and complete sovereignty over the whole of its territory.

Based on these principles, France intends to have a greater and more active presence than ever in the Middle East, with which it has close and long-standing relations. It will pursue this policy in close consultation with its European partners. Furthermore, Europe must have a place, alongside the two sponsors of the peace process, commensurate with the major contribution it is making to the region's development.

While we are endeavouring to build peace in areas in crisis, our efforts are no less ambitious for the entire European continent. In building step by step what we call an "architecture of security", we are really offering the international community a pillar of peace. France is making an important contribution to the establishment on

the European continent a system of global security that leaves no one out on the edge.

The construction of peace in Europe began with the construction of European institutions. It is being continued by deepening the Union. The intergovernmental Conference represents a decisive stage in this process, the forerunner of expansion, which is vital to the stability and prosperity of the continent.

France wishes to see the Union go still further by giving substance to the European identity in security and defence matters. To that end, we would like to see a strengthening of the Western European Union and its gradual *rapprochement* with the European Union.

The European identity is also based on the reform of the Atlantic Alliance. France, after taking a decisive step, is now working actively with its allies on the adaptation of structures. This should allow the emergence of a genuine European security and defence identity within the Alliance and make it possible in practice for the Western European Union, and therefore the European Union, to use the assets of the Alliance for military action that Europeans decide to undertake themselves. This reform is also the key to the process of expanding the Alliance, with which France is ready to assist. That expansion must naturally go hand-in-hand with in-depth dialogue and cooperation with Russia.

The third and last aspect of the structure is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is the sole forum for security in which all the European States are represented on an equal footing. That is why France believes that it is necessary to strengthen the organization. We hope that the Lisbon summit will provide the occasion to move towards the drafting of a charter or treaty linking all the States of the continent.

Important events therefore await us on the path that we have mapped out, including the OSCE summit in December and the NATO summit next year. The latter should bring together all the European States for a "pan-Europe day", demonstrating the community of security interests of all the countries on the continent, including Russia and our North American allies whose role in European security remains decisive. That is our ambition for a Europe of security that leaves no one out and is safer and more stable for the entire international community.

In this changing world, it is for the United Nations to bring out the common values that will be the foundations of civilization in the twenty-first century. It is thanks to its actions that we hope to build a safer, less harsh world for its inhabitants. First, we hope it will be a world in which the spectre of nuclear war has faded. For many years, public opinion called for a complete ban on nuclear tests. It was a hope and a plan that was certainly worthy, but remained blocked by the reality of East-West confrontation.

France welcomes the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which I had the honour to sign yesterday. This Treaty marks a major turning-point in the world's strategic balances.

It puts an end to the possibility of the nuclear-weapon States' developing new types of nuclear weapons, and it makes a decisive contribution to the fight against nuclear-weapon proliferation.

The Treaty thus opens the way to a more stable, safer world which will cease to be haunted by the twin dangers of the nuclear-arms race and the proliferation of these weapons.

There is another development which I find remarkable: the endorsement of human rights as a major principle of international relations. And the United Nations is at the centre of this development.

I should like in this regard to pay tribute to the remarkable work done by the Commission on Human Rights. In often difficult circumstances, it has pursued with pragmatism and tenacity its patient efforts to awaken consciences, to galvanize energies and to promote the rule of law in concrete ways.

Our aim must not be to pronounce excommunications or establish a blacklist, generally to no effect. Rather, it must be to promote the protection of individuals and the progress of law with due respect for differences.

I should also like to reaffirm France's determination to see crimes against humanity punished. The condemnation they warrant cannot brook any exception.

Together with others, France took the initiative of proposing the establishment of the international criminal Tribunal and the international Tribunal for Rwanda. I wish to reaffirm France's unqualified support for their founding work, and its backing in order that the tribunals might carry out their work in full.

Lastly, France is pleased that the foundations that have thus been laid have helped to speed up the debates on the establishment of an international criminal court, which we earnestly desire and to which we attach a high priority.

There are other important areas which we have begun to consider.

At this time when workers, money, factories and commerce operate at a heightened pace, it is essential to develop dialogue among the partners of economic life. This is really the only solid basis on which to build social protection that preserves the interests of all without harming the growth of economies.

The fiftieth anniversary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided the opportunity to recall the essential role of this organization in defining these minimal norms, without which the economic world is but a vast jungle.

Universality, however, must not lead to uniformity. The definition of common values, accepted by all, is based on respect for the identities that underpin the cultures of the world. Our values will thus command all the more respect for being expressed in all our respective languages.

Accordingly, we welcome the fact that the General Assembly last year adopted a resolution on multilingualism by a very large majority. Our civilizations, languages and cultures, inherited from an often turbulent history, but of irreplaceable richness, are a precious legacy for humankind.

The importance that my country ascribes to the French-speaking community reflects its determination to maintain the specificity and richness of the profoundly original world view of several hundreds of millions of people. We will not give this up.

The search for a new world ethic is not limited to human rights but extends to the whole of international life. Since 1945, international trade has been a powerful growth factor, contributing to a large extent to the expansion of the industrialized economies and to the success of the so-called emerging countries. But here too we must have rules of the game, acknowledged at the world level, so as to develop and regulate trade, ensure that it is fair and prevent unilateral conduct.

I should like to mention here the dangers of unilateralism. Unilateralism: behind this technocratic word lurks the temptation to impose the law of the strongest at the expense of dialogue and negotiation.

France and Europe cannot accept that one country, even if it is the most powerful, attempt to regulate world trade by itself by means of decisions that have extra-territorial scope. The World Trade Organization does not allow it, and no one should doubt the firmness of French and European reactions were such measures actually to be implemented.

The globalization of the economy and the liberalization of trade and investments have opened up unprecedented prospects. However, we must take care not to allow the gap to widen between the nations that trade, invest and derive profit from this new factor and those that remain on the sidelines of this new prosperity.

Each nation is responsible for itself and must create, through rigorous public management and compliance with its legislative rulings, optimum conditions for freeing private initiative, a factor in economic and commercial progress. But I do not believe that one can leave to market forces alone the care of ensuring the development of the poorest nations.

Here, too, the United Nations has an important role to play. By its side, the wealthiest States must affirm their solidarity in a tangible way: actively and effectively, this solidarity must assist the developing countries without becoming a substitute for them. On the threshold of a new century, poverty and exclusion cannot constitute the sole prospects for two-thirds of humankind. France, for its part, will not accept this.

This commitment concerns Africa in particular, where real prospects for progress are beginning to emerge.

Africa has embarked with courage and perseverance on the path to readjustment and recovery, which will enable it to find its place again in the great flows of world trade.

For the first time in a long time, Africa's growth rate has been on the order of 5 per cent these past two years, higher than its demographic expansion, very high though it is. This is a reassuring sign, attributable to the efforts made by the African States themselves. They have been able to cut public deficits, establish realistic monetary parities, open up their markets and move towards regional integration and democratization. Such

achievements, which are the result of structural reforms, seem to us to justify our confidence. France believes in Africa's future.

Still, official development assistance must be maintained and strengthened, but this assistance must be the subject of many initiatives. France has taken such initiatives within the European Union, the African Development Bank, the International Development Association and the International Monetary Fund.

Recently, at the summit of industrialized countries held in Lyons, my country reaffirmed the need to increase aid to the poorest countries, asking for more generous treatment of debt for them, and for a new global partnership to be defined between the developing countries and the multilateral institutions.

In this new world context, we have to consider the progress that the United Nations needs to make to be able to meet its responsibilities for the next century.

France approves of the current discussions on improving the representative character of the Security Council, in particular with respect to Germany, Japan and the States of the South.

Similarly, under the decisive impetus of the Secretary-General, the Organization has embarked on a vast effort for structural reform, the first results of which are beginning to show.

It is not a matter of changing everything but of seeing that every institution is in a position to make a useful contribution to the collective work in its own sphere.

That is why the members of the G-7 have proposed putting the savings realized through reforms into development projects.

France would like to see the reform of the United Nations economic and social sector concluded quickly so as to strengthen the overall coherence of the Organization. To that end, the roles and mandates of the specialized agencies and commissions in particular should be better defined, and waste and duplication eliminated.

These proposals are dictated solely by the wish to help the United Nations better fulfil its mission of fighting poverty and exclusion on a global scale.

In the case of the United Nations budget, many of us are worried about the financial crisis that threatens to paralyse the United Nations. The European Union has put forward concrete proposals for overcoming this crisis. It is now up to all States that have let their arrears accumulate to assume their responsibilities.

Whatever some may say, the United Nations is still one of our best chances for building a better world. Let us not spoil it.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Attaf.

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The current session of the United Nations General Assembly is taking place at a complex international time, marked by worrisome developments that exacerbate the feelings of anxiety and precariousness that plague the majority of humanity. These developments result from the profound historic changes that have occurred in recent years, which at one time had given us hope for a new and improved system of international relations that would be more open to the concerns of all in matters of security and more receptive to development needs.

The transformation of the international economy and accelerated trends towards globalization have, to be sure, resulted in new, more complex relations, but have also, due to certain harmful side effects, aggravated the imbalances and the dependency of many developing countries, whose courageous economic reforms, achieved at the highest of costs, still confront a hostile environment.

In this new era of heightened interdependence, a lack of solidarity still characterizes international relations, and self-interest is persistent in terms of both security and development, emphasizing the lack of a mechanism that can effectively narrow the growing gap between developed countries — ever more prosperous and stable — and a developing world faced with poverty and disorder of every sort.

Such observations emphasize that a real awareness on the part of the international community as a whole, and of the developed countries in particular, is slow in coming. They also confirm that piecemeal measures, taken on an urgent basis, are not enough to compensate for the lack of an overall approach to the global problems of our times.

Also quite clear in this regard is the marginalization of the mechanisms established to foster, channel and develop cooperation, solidarity and joint efforts among nations.

It is significant to note that on the heels of an anniversary session at which the commitment of States to strengthen the authority of the United Nations was forcefully reaffirmed, the Organization is experiencing one of its greatest crises, notably due to restrictions on the resources it needs to accomplish its missions — and this at a time when the demands on it have increased and when expectations are growing that it will play a larger role in preserving peace, in promoting and developing international cooperation, and in emancipating peoples still under domination. Hence the need for all States to discharge their obligations to our Organization, especially since it has embarked upon a courageous process of restructuring and reform designed to make it an instrument capable of generating and developing dialogue, cooperation and confidence among nations.

It should be noted, in this regard, that democratization, transparency and a better balance among its major organs all are requirements and basic objectives for a genuine reform of the institution and for ensuring the restoration of the General Assembly's authority and the functions conferred upon it by the Charter — also a key objective in order to enhance the effectiveness of its action and restore its credibility.

Similarly, it is important, within the framework of the question of the expansion of the Security Council, to pay special attention to such crucial aspects as the transparency of its work, the representation on it of the Member States on whose behalf it acts, and the links to be established with the General Assembly.

Algeria, which has made a priority, in its foreign policy, of strengthening the credibility and the authority of the United Nations, naturally provides continuous political support and makes varied contributions to its activities, as shown by our participation in the success of certain peace-keeping operations.

This is because our Organization remains the most appropriate framework for realizing our aspirations for shared security and development, at the very time when the realization of the twin Agendas for peace and development calls for respecting and strengthening its authority.

Here I should like to pay a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his vision, his perseverance and the tireless efforts he has been making in the service of adapting the United Nations to the challenges of the current era. His courage, his commitment, and the ambition he has to reinforce the reach and effectiveness of the Organization at a particularly difficult phase in the evolution of international relations have gained him the support of the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States. My country reiterates its support for him and wishes him every success at the head of the United Nations.

The dawning of a better-organized and more stable international order requires seeking joint responses to the most dangerous threats to the security and development of our countries. These responses can emerge only through joint undertakings, greater solidarity and an effective commitment to combat the most serious consequences of the rise in intolerance and extremism and the denial of the most basic principles of humanity.

Among these phenomena, international terrorism is more than ever manifest, in its seriousness as a universal phenomenon, as a threat to the stability of nations and to democratic values in our societies, and as a new type of threat to international peace and security. So combatting terrorism today requires effective international mobilization commensurate with the challenges of a key phenomenon which knows no limits or inviolable sanctuary.

It is fortunate that an international awareness of the dangers inherent in this scourge is beginning gradually to emerge. The international response, however, will to a large extent remain insufficient if it is not reflected in concrete action in line with three requirements: the establishment of true international cooperation; a show of greater solidarity; and determination commensurate with regularly stated political commitments.

In this regard, the fight against terrorism should not be ambiguous or selective, as it sometimes is. It should be marked by a constant, unfailing mobilization of efforts to dismantle the criminal chain of terrorism, including those who are perpetrators, those who are behind them, the various political networks and their sources of financing and supply, and the direct or indirect logistical support given by individuals, groups or States. The necessary conditions should be created for this. In this context, Algeria supports the idea of holding an international conference on the fight against terrorism.

Promoting more stable and more balanced international relations requires collective effort to improve the situation in areas of tension and conflict which threaten international peace and security. In order to be fruitful, these efforts should be buttressed by a search for viable, lasting solutions to these conflicts and by increasing joint efforts and strengthening existing frameworks for dialogue.

From this standpoint, the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an example of how indecision and lack of determination on the part of the world community cost us a great deal in tragedy and destruction. This long-suffering country is now, to be sure, embarking on the path to peace, even if still remains fragile, and strewn with many obstacles. We venture to hope, however, that its new institutional direction will insure for Bosnia and Herzegovina the peace it needs for stability and reconstruction.

Furthermore, the promotion of international relations also presupposes the strengthening of regional integration frameworks which today are the hallmark of an emerging new system of international relations.

In its immediate environment, Algeria is actively participating in the establishment and consolidation of joint action for solidarity and cooperation with its neighbours, with which it hopes to develop exemplary good-neighbourly relations. In the Maghreb, the identity, aspirations and common mission of the peoples of the region, naturally, make us desirous of retaining a plan for Maghreb unity as a central element of my country's policy. This is an irreversible national priority.

Algeria's determination is an expression of faith in the future as is the ability of each of the Arab Maghreb Union partners to take advantage of the opportunities for relations which can be mutually beneficial and which can meet the legitimate aspirations of our peoples. It is in this context of a unified, homogenous and strong Maghreb that Algeria hopes to contribute to the beginning of a just and lasting peaceful settlement of the issue of Western Sahara. It is in this regard too that Algeria continues to provide political support and human and financial resources to the Settlement Plan jointly put in place by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a view to holding a genuine, credible referendum which would guarantee the free exercise by the people of Western Sahara of its right to self-determination and independence.

Continuing problems encountered in the implementation of the Settlement Plan, and the uncertainty surrounding the desired political solution of this conflict, require that we redouble our efforts to establish better conditions for a genuine peace framework. We are convinced that this will be possible only if each and every party fully discharges its responsibilities in the implementation of the Plan. A rapid solution would only be advantageous for the peace and concord to which all peoples in the region are entitled.

This means in particular that the two parties to the conflict — the Kingdom of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front — should become aware that forthright, constructive and responsible dialogue can bring a solution to pending issues at the current stage, and can also help them to prepare for the future.

This also means that the duty of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, should be translated into a more sustained commitment and presence, and into a continued peace effort in line with international responsibilities towards the people of Western Sahara and their legitimate rights.

The establishment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution reflects the determination of African leaders to make a decisive contribution to reducing tensions and settling disputes on our continent. Thanks to this spirit, the painstaking efforts made by the countries of the Economic Community of West African States have opened up promising prospects for a settlement of the conflict in Liberia through national reconciliation and a return to democratically elected institutions.

Algeria hopes for a return to calm, reconciliation and national unity in Burundi, which are so crucial for the whole region. We continue to encourage all efforts being made by the countries of the Great Lakes region.

The lack of prospects for a settlement in Somalia and the international community's lack of interest are exacerbating the sufferings endured by the civilian population and are a source of great concern to us. While it is true that Somalians themselves must make a special effort, it is also the duty of the international community — through the United Nations, the OAU and the League of Arab States — to do everything possible to help in reconciliation and in the establishment of national institutions which could earn the embrace and confidence of all Somalians.

In the Mediterranean, Algeria has constantly worked towards the establishment of a permanent framework for

dialogue and cooperation which would enable the coastal States, without exception, to address their political, security, economic and human concerns. We have always acted with a view to defining a renewed operational machinery which would organize and lead a future of stability and progress in the European-Mediterranean theatre. This is what motivated Algeria to join the process begun in Barcelona. In our view, this was an initial accomplishment, an important step towards the establishment of new European-Mediterranean relations based on mutual confidence and joint actions, which will give tangible content to the indivisibility of security and development in the region.

In the Middle East, recent developments have in many respects caused us concern and alarm. The Madrid conference created a historic opportunity for a peaceful settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the name of good faith and responsibility, the commitments entered into must be respected. Algeria hopes to pursue its contribution to a just and lasting peace, and renews its commitment to the principals adopted by the Madrid conference: land for peace; the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); and respect for the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. These principles are at the heart of the peace process and the basis for our participation in it. Algeria believes that there is no alternative to a settlement based on the total withdrawal by Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and on the right of the Palestinian people to the establishment of a sovereign State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Today, it is the duty and the responsibility of the international community, and in particular of the co-sponsors of the peace process, to show resolve and determination in continuing their efforts to promote the success of the process — a process which has been jeopardized by Israeli intransigence and back-sliding.

The improvement of relations between Arab States and their unity constitute an essential pillar of the peace process. The dawning of peace will depend to a large extent on the mobilization of Arab potential and capacity in the service of peace and to promote relations based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, the non-use of force or the threat of force, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. All of us, Algeria included, must reverse the logic of confrontation, which has compromised relations between Arab countries since the Gulf war, and work towards reconciliation on the basis of respect for international law.

In this context, the unjustified violations of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq require an increased awareness on the part of the world community of the risks inherent in such practices, which are contrary to international law, and of their effects on the stability of the region. Such violations, which Algeria rejects, have only increased the suffering of the Iraqi people, who have already been sorely tried by several years of sanctions which can no longer be justified.

In the same vein, Algeria remains concerned at the continuation of sanctions against our sister country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and by the sufferings these involve for the Libyan people, to which we would like to reiterate our full solidarity. Furthermore, Algeria renews its support for the restoration of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the Abu Musa islands and the Lesser and Greater Tunb islands, which remain under foreign occupation. My country also expresses its solidarity with Bahrain in the face of the increased foreign interference and threats to which it has been subjected.

Algeria's actions with regard to disarmament stem from its conviction that the acquisition, stockpiling and increased sophistication of arms, in particular high-technology weapons and weapons of mass destruction, do not bring security, but undermine the essential establishment of confidence among nations. Strengthened by this conviction, Algeria has shown — through concrete initiatives taken at the international, regional and internal levels — its commitment to strengthening the process towards general and complete disarmament by eliminating weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, we recall our participation in the drafting and adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an initial stage for more substantial measures in this area. Similarly, after having ratified the Convention on chemical weapons and adhering to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty, on 30 March 1996 Algeria signed a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Acting with similar responsibility, Algeria has helped African efforts. These led to the adoption on 11 April of the Pelindaba Treaty, by which the States Members of the Organization of African Unity declared Africa a nuclear-free zone. This African momentum should be encouraged by similar efforts to establish new zones, especially in the Middle East, which remains a legitimate source of concern for all Arab countries, in particular with regard to Israeli nuclear potential.

A better structured and more unified international economic order is a precondition for international peace and security. The globalization of economic, social and political problems, the lack of coordinated management of interdependent issues, the increase in global challenges, and the weakening of national regulatory structures make it ever more necessary to establish new structures for global management within a framework of true democratization of international relations. In response to these objectives, the international community must shoulder more responsibility for the many, interdependent links which hold it together; improve its ability for a collective response to the challenge of development; and increase its support for these efforts.

The worsening of the external, bilateral and multilateral debt crisis of developing countries; the erosion and unpredictable nature of resources from export earnings; restrictions on access to markets; the lack of fairness in international trade; one-sided views which affect cooperation; and the unilateral nature of the world decision-making process: all these highlight in different ways the various obstacles which remain on the path to development.

This means that, in order to organize a common future on a new basis, the international community must make development a greater concern, promote joint solutions for the sustained growth of the countries of the South and ensure their true integration in the world economy.

In this vein, the issue of development financing deserves special attention in the context of the persistent external debt crisis in the countries of the South and the drying up of funds for cooperation, since the approaches taken to this issue thus far have been questionable, to say the least. Imaginative and more global solutions must be found to the external debt problem of the countries of the South and their access to international financing. It is also important to include in our vision of development the enormous potential of the expanding world trade expected from the fair and consistent implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements.

The first Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), to be held soon in Singapore, will be a good opportunity for the international community to make a clear appraisal of the implementation of these agreements and to make the necessary corrections for a more significant and equitable participation of the countries of the South in international trade. It is through its predictability, stability, openness and transparency that the new world trade system established by the WTO will become a true and forceful factor for development.

The international economic situation is still characterized by gaps that make the future of the world more uncertain, given the increase in inequalities and the risk of social rifts they entail. These gaps, which also affect developed countries faced with the severe problems of adjusting to unemployment and exclusion, show how, faced with globalization, international society can only find joint solutions to global problems, particularly those of growth and development. It is in Africa, where the socio-economic situation is evolving more tragically, that this dimension can be seen in all its gravity with the expansion of abject poverty, the spread of disease and the threat of impending famine.

It is on that continent that we find the greatest expression of the categorical need for renewed and strengthened international solidarity in a spirit of open-mindedness and partnership to help African countries in their efforts at the socio-economic restructuring necessary to lay the foundations for lasting political and social balance and to open new prospects of hope for their peoples. It is in fact politically unacceptable and morally intolerable to continue to ignore the international threat inherent in the deterioration of the development crisis on that continent.

In this vein, the new appeal made last March by the Secretary-General through a special initiative of the United Nations system for Africa deserves our full support, since it compels the international community, and, in particular the wealthy countries, to face up to their basic responsibilities to our continent.

In a world that is constantly changing, we must undertake in all diligence and determination to work together to set new balances, enable mankind harmoniously to manage its interdependence and make the international economic environment more conducive to development.

By its very nature and unique mission, the United Nations is the appropriate place to give an articulate, joint global response to these challenges. Who better than the United Nations can carry out such a task at a time when managing interdependence is more than ever at the heart of the problems of development and peace?

That is why we should come to an agreement on the development programme proposed by the Secretary-General. This programme should support United Nations efforts for Africa. This is why the criteria for streamlining and efficiency which accompany the reform process in the United Nations system in the economic and social spheres should be made manifest in a joint quest for common objectives in organizing the new system of international relations. It is by doing so and by finding further inspiration in its Charter that the United Nations will avoid drifting off track and will become a more effective instrument for the orderly reconstruction of international relations and thereby provide the necessary stability for peace and development.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.